

Message Text

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51

ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 ADP-00 INT-08 L-03 AID-20 CIAE-00

COME-00 FRB-02 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00 XMB-07

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R 191015 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5062

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

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E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: ENGR, DM, NI

SUBJ: UNION OIL PROPOSES TRANSFER CONCESSION

ROME PASS AMBASSADOR ANDERSON

REF: COTONOU 0508

1. UNION OIL VICE PRESIDENT BRANDON PRESENTED REPORT APRIL 18 ON RESULTS OF COMPANY' S EXPLORATIONS FOR OIL IN DAHOMEAN TERRITORIAL WATERS TO MINPUBWORKS ACHADE. ACCORDING BRANDON, REPORT CONTAINED SUMMARY OF ALL DATA COLLECTED OVER PAST NINE YEARS, BUT DID NOT GIVE UNION' S ESTIMATE OF RESERVES AS EARLIER REQUESTED BY MINISTER. NO MENTION WAS MADE OF MISSING EVALUATION, AND ACHADE SEEMED PLEASED WITH REPORT.

2. IN REPLY TO DIRECT QUESTION, BRANDON ADMITTED TO DAHOMEANS THAT
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UNION DOES NOT WISH EXPLOIT PETROLEUM RESERVES THEY FOUND DURING THEIR EXPLORATORY DRILLING. HE EXPLAINED THAT LARGE COMPANY LIKE UNION COULD NOT MAKE PROFIT ON LIMITED RESERVES UNION FOUND IN THEIR CONCESSION. HOWEVER, UNION NOW IN PROCESS OF ATTEMPTING INTEREST A " MEDIUM- SIZED AMERICAN COMPANY" IN TAKING OVER CONCESSION AND EXPLOITING OIL, IF MRGD WILLING ALLOW TRANSFER OF CONCESSION. ACHADE ASKED NAME OF AMERICAN COMPANY. BRANDON DEMURRED ON GROUNDS THAT HE COULD NOT GIVE NAME OF OTHER COMPANY UNTIL THAT COMPANY AGREED TAKE ON CONCESSION. THIS REASONING ACCEPTED BY ACHADE WHO AGREED PLACE TRANSFER PROPOSAL BEFORE COUNCIL MINISTERS AND GIVE UNION REPLY BY APRIL 24. AT THIS POINT, BRANDON MADE CLEAR THAT UNION WOULD GIVE UP CONCESSION IF IT COULD NOT BE TRANSFERRED. IF MRGD AGREEABLE TO TRANSFER, BRANDON PROMISED RETURN DAHOMEY BY MAY 30 TO GIVE DEFINITE ANSWER ON WHETHER UNION SUCCEEDED IN FINDING ANOTHER COMPANY WILLING EXPLOIT OIL.

3. BRANDON SAID UNION NOW WISHES LEAVE DAHOMEY IN MOST GRACEFUL MANNER POSSIBLE. HE OPTIMISTIC ON WILLINGNESS " OTHER COMPANY" TO TAKE OVER CONCESSION AND EXPLOIT DAHOMEY' S OIL. PRIMARY REASON FOR UNION' S DELICATE HANDLING OF DAHOMEANS IS THEIR WISH RE- ENTER NIGERIA TO PROSPECT FOR OIL. BRANDON ACKNOWLEDGED HIS CONCERN THAT, SHOULD UNION' S REPUTATION BE TARNISHED IN DAHOMEY, THIS COULD JEOPARDIZE CHANCES NEGOTIATING CONCESSIONS ELSEWHERE IN WEST AFRICA.

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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